

It's "Field Against Wichita" in Western League, Says Sporting News Review

LEAGUE CHAMPIONS ALMOST INTACT FOR APPROACHING CAMPAIGN AND WILL BE MIGHTY HARD TO BEAT

(Editor's note.—The following comprehensive Western league review, discussing the make-up and chances of each team and also league affairs, was written for the Sporting News by L. H. Addington, a scribe with Western league experience. It appears to be just about as accurate a summary as can be offered, three weeks before the season opens. The World prints it in full.)

WITH the cruiser, Denver, reformed and ready to dip her keel into the deep of baseball in place of the class C gunboat, Joplin, the Western league flotilla is set for the cruise of 1922. When the fleet tied up in the harbor last fall there was much doubt as to the make-up for the following season. When the ship carpenters were called in to do the winter repairs and overhauling, after much controversy and chatter, they finally decided that the old Joplin boat should be thrown out of service and that Denver, once a member of the squadron, was to sail in place of the Miner bark.

The Sioux City was figured fit to weather at least another season, and so when they get off on the cruise, they will have a new ship, the Western league, which is the exception. Much overhauling has been done, barnacles have been scraped off, new coats of paint dabbed on and they're ready to ride the waves.

Changes in the pilots have been many and varied. But two of the old heads who were in command when the fleet pulled in for the winter have remained. Joe Berger, who steered Wichita into port ahead of the others, still hangs on to the helm of the Jazzes, and Chief Barker, who sailed in second with his Omaha Buffaloes, still holds sway.

Others have new hands to guide them. Oklahoma City opened the gate for Dick Green, who did nothing more for the Indians this year than guide a shabby sailing crew into third place. In his stead, Addington is found the veteran receiver, Chief Fisher, who matriculated inland from the Pacific Coast league.

Frank Metz and Red Anderson, who did the Alphonse and Gaston act in leading the Sox City Sox, have been supplanted in the managerial part by Chick Matlack, who has inherited some of the shakels in the club along with his brother-in-law, Louis J. McKenna.

Jimmy Owens has been chucked from his job at St. Joe and his duties are assumed by Willy Smith, who sailed in second with his Minneapolis in 1921. Yip, incidentally returned to the Millers.

Jimmy Hamilton remained from Joplin even before the transfer to Denver was made and Joe Dunn, ex-pilot of Bloomington, who sailed in second with the franchise and will be at the helm of the Denver entry.

A passing which every fan in the league will regret is that of good old Jack Coffey from Des Moines. In the past, he was a gentleman on or off the ball field. He was Jack, and he was a likable and respected chap wherever he hit. But Jack had been with the Boosters for some five years, and his hands were tied for the lack of funds with which to build and operate. His friends are glad to know that he has caught on with Hartford in the eastern league.

Bill Clymer stuck to his old habit of come and go. He was in Tulsa one minute and out the next. Bill goes to Newark in the International league and the Tulsa fans are crying over the acquisition of Jack Leivelt, premier batsman of the league, as their new manager.

So much for the leaders. The crews of many of the teams have changed in pace with the changes in the management. The Tulsa team, for example, remains almost intact, as a target for the other clubs to shoot at and it has been a battle of buy, trade and sell on the part of the others to hit the bull's-eye. With Wichita holding its own the rest realize they have some hard steps to climb and have done this and that, here and there, with the idea of matching the gait set by the knights of Frank Isbell.

As a result, the league promises to be faster and will be survival of the fittest, or the one who can kick the most in the field will be the one to win. Before hashing over the individualities of the various entries, it might be well to consider a few matters of interest to the circuit in general.

Tearney Hasn't Kept Pace.

President Al Tearney's managerial staff, as a whole, needs a lot of bolstering. Joe Becker, dean of the Western league, and one of the most popular in the swing, has purchased a home in Joplin and turned to chicken farming and things more distant from baseball. The veteran Jack Daly will back him in the sunny skies of the Texas league. Bill Guthrie goes to work in the Southern association and Bill Buckley has left the fold.

Ollie Anderson will be back and possibly Matty Flannery. Howard Holmes was transferred from the National league and while he has not yet signed with the Western he may be counted on as a possibility. The picture of Ormsby and Christian, a pair who showed only for a brief spell in the circuit, is unknown.

While it would be impossible to please every fan and manager in the league, it must be said that Tearney had a pretty good bunch last year and he will have to hump to match that crew of umpires for this campaign.

As to playing schedule, very little can be said for the transfer to Denver delayed its adoption and to date the program of play has not come off the press. Some difficulty is bound to arise over getting the teams in and out of the "Mile High" city but the managers of the schedule believe they have that problem worked out. It is probable that Denver will have long home stances and long road excursions to eliminate as much skipping to and fro as possible.

One matter that needs patching in the league is that of scoring. Last season seven of the official figure hounds promptly turned in complete records of the contests staged in their cities, but the data could not be compiled at the close of the year because one keeper of the record was negligent. It is understood that this matter has been remedied and such being the case, the circuit as a whole will be benefited to a greater extent than is generally realized.

Field Against Wichita.

Turning to the prospects of the individual clubs of the year, let us first peer into the city of Wichita, where the 1921 rag proudly flies from its lofty mast. A dangerous, murderous club, with a set of the most wicked of bludgeons, was the 1921 entry of the past year. Practically the same team will take the field again and every other entry in the ranks knows what it has to beat.

To start with, if the Witches had been wrecked from stem to stern, they would still bear watching. Any outfit headed by two old foxes such as Frank Isbell and Joe Berger will command respect from any opponent who gives a snap about getting up in the money. Berger, as field captain and manager of his crew, is as slick as a fresh onion with the hide off, and don't think for a minute that Joe loses any opportunity to take advantage of an opening. And if there isn't any he'll make one.

Fred Beck, a genuine first sacker, is the only known departure from the ranks of the championship club. Fred costs his legs with Wichita Falls in the Texas league this year. While a mighty good man, Beck will not cut such a hole in the line-up by his absence for the vacuum has already been plugged.

Mule Washburn, who has played as second, but who was originally a first baseman, goes to Beck's place, and Happy McDowell steps into the keystone job.

Reports have come out that Lyman Smith, the Mercury-footed little lead-off man and keeper of the Tulsa team, has retired and gone into business. If such is the case, Berger should worry about filling one place on his nine. The old baggage of blunderbuss artists are still there, including Carl East, Pat Haley, Johnny Butler, Jim Blakesley, Berger and Washburn.

Joe didn't have a pitching staff to shout about, but he didn't need it with a hitting combination that was likely to reproduce the world war in any inning. At that there was some stuff on his staff that may come around this year and give a pretty good exhibition of the flipper's art.

Omaha Not Beaten in March.

But with all this true of the Wichita club,

the seven other members of the circuit must not be counted out. Not by any means. Don't throw in the sponge for Barney Hurch and Mike Foss, who do business in Omaha, Barney and Mike have the one whorlwhall in their pockets and the other kind in their bones to build an aggregation that will keep the rest of the boys on their toes.

The Hurch leaders have made some changes and their contingent, which finished second in 1921 is out on the field in full, but they can be jotted down as very much among those present.

Jack Leivelt, who led the league in putting the older out of the apple, has switched his attentions to Tulsa and it would be folly to say that his big history slapslap is not going to be missed from any club that loses his services. But if Pete Schneider, secured by Omaha from Joplin when that city was still in the league, returns to fourth, the absence of slapping Jack is not going to be felt so keenly. Pete is performer of high class who will hammer his way up there with the best of them. If Pete decides to remain out of the fan again this year, Barney has Jack Walters to fall back on. Walters comes out of the Canadian west and has a record and a rep that are plenty and more.

Whitely Gibson is all that need be said about second. The keystone is well taken care of. At short Omaha has Wilcox from Chattanooga, short Mike Foss, who has the big O. K., and another regular by the name of Walters, who comes well fortified with compliments.

At third is Jack Lee, the college star, to fill the boots of Fred Hurch, who advanced to the Detroit Tigers. Lee was up with Detroit for a spell and went out to the Pacific coast from the Tigers. Hurch thinks he can deliver.

Billy Lee, as good an outfielder and hitter as one could want, was reported sold early in the year, but seems to have ginked and is ready to swing his bat in the outfield. He will be a good year on the coast in 1922. He will handle the bulk of the receiving, backed up by Jim Long in the absence of Dick Barker.

Outside of Harper, the Indians seemed to have replaced every missing figure with a worthy successor and it would be surprising if they showed up unimpaired.

Not much has been said about the new faces coming into the league under Sioux City and St. Joe colors. The Sox have lost some valuable players in Tom Davenport, Russell and Kieffer, who went back to the White Sox. To replace them in part, they have picked up Earl Hillon and Harry Seibold from Oakland.

Chick Matlack, new owner of the club, is not much to look at, but he is a good player. He has many ideas up his sleeve for Chick is no novice in the game and the rest of the bunch may hear some loud roaring from him before the curtain goes down. He and McKenna purchased the holdings from the citizen boosters who formerly controlled things in Sioux City.

Chick will assume the duties of manager, but Hippo Metz, who held that honor last year, is retained for the first sack and to wield his ponderous willow which rung out many a hit in the previous grid.

Ray Graham, the pepper box receiver is to get a tryout with Chicago, but the Sox still have Wray Query, who was let out by the Tulsa Oilers last year.

St. Joe destinies have come under the guiding hand of Wally Smith, who will direct the team and play at the prime sack. Walter Nuffer is again eligible for second, and Young Brown, who looked mighty sweet at short in the closing days of '21, is going to take another whirl, although he may have to bow to Tony DeFazio.

Malcolm McDonald, figured to be the same steady old figure at third, Stevenson from Vanderbilt university are set to put some of the Tulsa fans to sleep. Tom Connolly's departure to Oakland makes their path all the softer.

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all worry of that corner is annihilated. Hurch has undergone an operation during the winter and his fitness to play, is an undetermined quantity. If he can't perform then it will be Joe Tate on the warm corner to fill in for Eddie Witche, who goes to the Texas league.

Harper's shift to Cincinnati makes a big dent in the outfield. He was easily the outstanding fly chaser of the league and carried a willow with a ringing punch. Red Claxson, Phil and Eddie Moore are still in the Indian camp and can take care of two districts in the pastime.

Ralph Hendley, who has been shifted to the outfield on many occasions, can, if necessary, take hold of the remaining spot.

Rocky Middleton, fly batted from Seattle, is also in line for recognition in the other games and should make the old heads of the club step about.

In the box will be Nick Allen, the slapper with the best record in the Western league now. Nick is a flaming example of what control and a little noodle work will do in the average of any of the so-called "stuffs" of the ball club, with any kind of reasonable luck.

Phil John Barker comes in from Detroit and is being counted on, as is Slim Love, from the holdovers of last season. Salisbury has been shifted to Denver, Mitchell in Cincinnati and Shaver to Detroit. No doubt the Indians have other pit dispensers in the contract box, but they've been more or less under cover, so far as publicity is concerned.

Fisher Should Be Capable.

Last, but not least, comes the catching staff, which is headed by Fish Fisher, who is also looked to succeed Dick Green in the role of manager. This is an experienced head and has a good year on the coast in 1922. He will handle the bulk of the receiving, backed up by Jim Long in the absence of Dick Barker.

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LOOKS LIKE LEAGUE AS A WHOLE WOULD BE FASTER—EVERYBODY PULLING FOR 'SMILING JACK' HERE

To show an outfield that will hold its own with any of the competition. Some talk of the popular Charles Jackson being reinstated, but not definite. But even if he doesn't show up the rest of the outfield will hold good. It will consist of Red Claxson, Ray Fisher and Fred Boniville. Claxson is there all around. Fisher's year with the Sox should give him the necessary experience in catching and he doesn't need any more in the hitting line. Boniville has recovered from the broken leg sustained early in the 1921 field and he can show a lot of them a few things when he gets going. Chief Nason and Walters are going to take a try at breaking into this combination.

To serve in the horseshoe, Smith has Costello, Longhen, McColl, Bert, Lundberg and Cullum of other seasons and Bill Marshall from Toledo. If he needs more he should have little trouble in landing them from the Minneapolis club, who brother to the Jazzes. To handle the slaps is Harry Kandler, who understands to Yip Dwyer, and Grabowski, who got a trial with Minneapolis last time out.

Dunn Denver's Biggest Outfit.

The Denver outfit, which succeeds Joplin, is in the hands of Joe Dunn, who recently was two games for Birmingham out of three tries. Joe is the biggest asset the club has, a fiery fighting leader who battles every inch of ground and trails that his nose follow in his trail. Tom Hayden, who was with the Sox in 1921, but for a number of things left to work on and will add a few more needed fixtures before he is ready to front the mull.

Doc Shanley from Oklahoma City or Art Rung from last year will cover first. Joe is at present looking about for a second sacker. Bill Patterson from Seattle will take care of anything that happens around short. Johnny Jenkins, late of Cedar Rapids, is an old crush of Dunn's over to the Third-I league and the Denver boss thinks he'll guard third in a highly satisfactory manner.

Chief among those running for the outfield offices are the veterans, Tommy Long, Gene Goss, who made a big hit at Tacoma, and Eddie Danner, a man of Dunn's own picking from the Third-I league.

There is a raft of pitchers, good, bad and not in the running, which Dunn will have to sort out. Salisbury, acquired in trade from Oklahoma City, is a known fixture. Al Zweifel and Thompson, who are not new, and should make good. Federico, Meeks and Snyder from the Southwest and Virginia leagues have a look-in and there is a myriad of others for Dunn to size up.

There was not a better hunter in the league than Catcher Dick Barker, who goes to Denver over the trade route from Oklahoma City. Dick would like to catch the entire schedule, barring injuries, and he'd just about make a success of it. Red Smith is not booked to return with Frank Ringer from Eugene. Dick and Dunn ready to put on the mask if necessary, there won't be much need to scout receivers.

Hayden signed up everything that was willing to bite its tail out of the Joplin press's chair and Dunn has in addition to those named, an "endless chain" list of ball players for every position ever played. Many of them will have to be dropped and those mentioned seem to be the nucleus for this outfit. Nobody is making any strenuous predictions for Denver, because of the unsettled condition of things there, but Joe is a scrapper and he may be causing a lot of worry before they hear the last of him.

Good Bunch at Des Moines.

Look out for this Des Moines crew. Dick Green seems to have the knack and faculty of hurrying any old kind of a club up into the money and he has a very good looking bunch to start in with at the Booster City. If they don't better their sixth place position this year, they'll be in a bad way. Nobody is making any strenuous predictions for Denver, because of the unsettled condition of things there, but Joe is a scrapper and he may be causing a lot of worry before they hear the last of him.

Big Wagon Graham, another one of the former Indians, holds first for Dick. Ed Yuna, a hefty hitter and a clever enough fielder, will be back at second. Eugene Turgeon, with a batting record in the Dakota circuit, arrived to replace Hal Rhyne at short. Rhyne going back to Fresno. Eddie Grant will be in there scrapping and yelling at third again. Claude Mitchell

from Oakland promises to give somebody a run for an infield place on the list.

The outfield boom up with Joe Horan, Art Wagner and Horace Milan. Dick O'Connor now gets his mail in care of the Shreveport club. If Horan will believe himself some of the fences will suffer around the league, and Art Wagner, formerly of Joplin and Cleveland, will, right on his O'Connell. Milan was a Booster last year and they need none better.

Otto Metz and Karl Black head the fingers and both are hard-shelled nuts and tough to crack when they're in there. Adrian Lynch is laid over and others will make their debut for the Indians. There is Rube Marshall from Wichita Falls, who is quite a pitcher when he lays off the joy stuff John Verhout from San Antonio, whose backers says he will go strong, is another one in figures.

Jack Barker will be head receiver on the staff and his partner will be Bob Anderson, brother of Chin, whom the Boosters sold to Beaumont during the snowflake season.

Thrown together the club looks very respectable and about as good as the world they've ever had. In Des Moines looks brighter with a resumption of car service, which was cut off in a lean tangle last summer and hindered the patrons in getting to and from the park.

All Pull for Smiling Jack.

At the bottom of last year's heap lies the Tulsa Oilers, who in the world they ever got there can be explained only one way, internal chaffing of some sort. Their men were players enough and they had the goods, and their miserable showing last year was an upset to all of them.

It is hoped that things go better with Smiling Jack Leivelt at the helm, for he deserves a better fate, and things are far from gloomy down in Oklahoma.

Active well, of course, cover first and continue to shatter the ambitions of aspiring pitchers. Jack needed a second sacker and an outfielder from last reports, and he may already have them at this writing. He still has McKenna, who is short, and Frank Thompson and Fred Bauman from Toledo to mess it out for third. Frankie was laid on the shelf with a bum arm last year, but has a determined spirit to go back and show the Tulsa fans something they haven't yet seen. Bauman won't cover, but he'll hit better and it's a battle for the better man to win.

Yank Davis, who will probably die in the service out in the Oilers right field, is as young as ever and ready to start. Yank can hit 'em a mile and if Fred and Crawford will refrain from moving back that right field fence—an agitated move—Yank will be all right when it comes to fielding. Supporting him in the outer works is Herschel Bennett and the one chaser yet to come.

Bennett is a youngster with a world of promise who didn't quite stick with the Oilers last season but should make it now.

George Boehler is the ace of the Tulsa pitching staff and if they give him any support he'll reverse his poor record of last year. Tom Lukavovic can hold his own and Ray Richmond can do a bit more if he doesn't retire. There's been some talk of that. Oscar Haugland is coming back and Leivelt thinks very highly of Bob Trentman, whom he obtained from Milwaukee. Then there is Lefty Harris who is to get another whack at the staff.

Catching is the least of Jack's worries. Tex Crosby, purchased from the Minneapolis-St. Joe combination, and Eddie Spellman will be all that is necessary in that line.

Some mighty good men have passed from Tulsa during the winter, but there are still some good ones left and Jack should be sailing along.

Those who have gone include Jimmy Burke, a regular little fellow whom Spencer Abbott grabbed for Memphis; Phil Todd, Billy Glasgow, John Hoving and Herb Prunt, whom the St. Louis Browns called in, and Tom Connolly who was peddled to Rochester.

So there they stand, ready to shove off in the Western league. By the time this comes off the press, most of the crews will be in camp. When the fire the starting gun on April 12, according to the tentative schedule, the pace is going to be speedy.

OKLAHOMA CITY WINS CAGE TITLE, BEATS SHAWNEE

Takes Final Game, 37-28; Runners-up Beat Tulsa by 34 to 19

NORMAN, March 18.—Oklahoma City won the state high school basketball championship here late today, defeating Shawnee 37 to 28. By winning through the list of eight district champions, the Oklahoma City team holds undisputed title to the Oklahoma interscholastic championship for the 1922 season. Oklahoma City also holds the honors of the Central conference.

The champions went into the finals by eliminating Keota this morning by a score of 39 to 26.

Shawnee, the runner-up, disposed of Tulsa, 24 to 19, in the semifinals